

Whiston Rural District Council.

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# Annual Report

BY

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Medical Officer of Health for the Whiston

Rural District,

FOR THE YEAR 1919.

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# Whiston Rural District Council.

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## ANNUAL REPORT.

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The Ministry of Health have issued a lengthy memorandum as to the contents and arrangement of the Annual Reports of Medical Officers of Health for 1919.

This requires considerably more information than has usually been necessary in former years, and in a specified form, to which I will adhere as far as possible.

### **NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT AND POPULATION.**

The Census Population, 1911, was 21,196. This included all Public Institutions in the district.

The estimated Population for 1919 is:

For Birth Rate ... ..	19,692
For Death Rate ... ..	18,904

These figures do not include the inmates of any Public Institutions, and are based on the rationing returns supplied by the Ministry of Food. From the sugar ration returns, I gather that the number of persons in Public Institutions was 2,079. This number is considerably less than it was at the time that the Census was taken, when there were 1,308 in the Asylum Annexe and 1,378 in the Workhouse, and I should say at least 150 more in other Institutions, making a total of 2,836. This number deducted from the total Census population, would give us 18,360 of a population in 1911, living outside Public Institutions, as compared with our estimated death-rate population of 18,904 in 1919, thus showing an increase of 544 over the number of residents in 1911.

The estimated death-rate population for 1918 was 19,306, an excess of 402 over the latest estimate. In my opinion, both figures cannot be correct, as during the twelve months, a large number of men have been demobilised from the Forces; 29 new houses have been built; and we have more overcrowding than ever before.

Under these circumstances, in spite of the estimates being made out from the rationing returns, I consider that both are below the mark, and our present population cannot possibly be less than it was in 1918. It is to be hoped that a quinquennial Census may be taken in future instead of the decennial which has obtained up to now.

### **PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT.**

The District comprises 12 Townships situated in South West Lancashire. The ground is mostly flat in character, the only rising ground being in Rainhill and Windle. A considerable portion of the sub-strata is red sandstone; in other parts it is clay.

### **SOCIAL CONDITIONS, &c.**

The Inhabitants mostly belong to the working classes, with a fair number of the middle class in five or six Townships, and a few landowners living in larger houses in districts like Hale, Knowsley, Rainhill, and Speke.

The staple Industries of the district are Agriculture, Coal Mining, Copper Manufacture, Tanning Extract Manufacture, Railway Creosoting, Iron and Brass Foundering, Tool Making, Brick Making, and Patent Manure Manufacture; but many of the inhabitants are employed in works outside the district, such as the Wire Works in Prescott, and the Chemical and Copper Works in Widnes and St. Helens.

I do not consider that any of the occupations followed within the district are unhealthy in any special manner, though the coal miner is more susceptible to phthisis than those following most other occupations.

In normal times there is very little female labour employed, though since the war a certain number of women have been retained in some of the works, and a number of girls are usually employed at the collieries, and also during the Autumn months on the land, chiefly in potato picking. I do not consider that the amount of female labour in the district has any appreciable effect on infantile mortality.

### VITAL STATISTICS.

The Registrar General has again furnished me with estimates of the Population, and with a return of the Births and Deaths which have occurred in the district during the year.

The Registrar General's Return is as follows:—

Causes of Death (Civilians Only)				Males.	Females.
	All Causes ... ..			171	167
1	Enteric Fever ... ..			—	—
2	Small Pox ... ..			—	—
3	Measles ... ..			—	—
4	Scarlet Fever ... ..			1	1
5	Whooping Cough ... ..			1	1
6	Diphtheria and Croup ... ..			1	—
7	Influenza ... ..			19	25
8	Erysipelas ... ..			1	—
9	Pulmonary Tuberculosis ... ..			14	10
10	Tuberculous Meningitis ... ..			2	1
11	Other Tuberculous Diseases ... ..			2	1
12	Cancer, Malignant Disease ... ..			5	14
13	Rheumatic Fever ... ..			2	—
14	Meningitis ... ..			4	2
15	Organic Heart Disease ... ..			9	17
16	Bronchitis ... ..			17	9
17	Pneumonia (all forms) ... ..			26	14
18	Other Respiratory Diseases ... ..			1	2
19	Diarrhœa &c. (under two years) ... ..			2	3
20	Appendicitis and Typhlitis ... ..			—	1
21	Cirrhosis of Liver ... ..			1	—
21A	Alcoholism ... ..			—	—
22	Nephritis and Bright's Disease ... ..			4	2
23	Puerperal Fever ... ..			—	2
24	Parturition, apart from Puerperal Fever ... ..			—	2
25	Congenital Debility &c. ... ..			9	9
26	Violence apart from Suicide ... ..			5	3
27	Suicide ... ..			2	—
28	Other Defined Diseases ... ..			43	46
29	Causes ill-defined or unknown ... ..			—	2
Deaths of Infants under one year of age (total) ... ..				22	24
	Do.	Do.	Do. (Illegitimate)	1	—



	Males.	Females.
Total Births ... ..	236	202
Legitimate ... ..	233	191
Illegitimate ... ..	3	11
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Population for Birth Rate ... ..	19,692	
Population for Death Rate ... ..	18,904	

The population Estimates are based mainly on the rationing returns supplied by the Ministry of Food.

A comparison with other years made by the County Medical Officer of Health is as follows:—

	Birth-rate	Deate-rate	Epidemic Death-rate	Phthisis Death-rate	Infantile Death-rate
1919	22.2	17.8	0.52	1.26	105
1918	20.0	15.0	1.39	1.19	85
Mean of 10 years } 1909—1918 }	22.9	13.1	1.25	0.82	95
Increase or decrease in 1919 on—					
Previous year	+2.2	+2.8	—0.87	+0.07	+20
10 years average	—0.7	+4.7	—0.73	+0.44	+10

I have also received the return of the whole of England of Wales. In this case the Birth Rate is 18.5, and the Death Rate from all causes 13.8, both of which are considerably lower than our own.

The most disconcerting feature in our return is the high infantile mortality rate, which this year has risen to 105 per 1,000 births. I am strongly of opinion that this is due, to a great extent, to the amount of overcrowding existing, although the influenza epidemic undoubtedly largely contributed to it. Nearly half the deaths of infants under one year occurred during the first quarter of the year, when influenza was prevalent, and three cases of death were directly attributed to it, while there were four deaths from pneumonia, and three from bronchitis, during the same period, and both these diseases are usual sequelae of influenza.

The number of deaths of infants in the above return is given as 46, but I have only been able to trace 44 from the returns received from the local registrars, but this would still give a rate of over 100.

### POOR LAW RELIEF.

The amount of Out-Relief given in each township during the year is as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
Bold ... ..	76	16	0
Cronton ... ..	36	2	0
Ditton ... ..	236	6	0
Eccleston ... ..	82	7	0
Hale ... ..	18	9	6
Halewood ... ..	139	17	8
Knowsley ... ..	0	0	0
Rainhill ... ..	156	8	4
Speke ... ..	0	0	0
Tarbock ... ..	0	0	0
Whiston ... ..	460	16	0
Windle ... ..	23	5	6
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Total ... ..	£1,230	8	0

### HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

With the exception of the Union Infirmary at Whiston, there is no general hospital in the district. A number of cases of accidents and disease, other than strictly pauper cases, are admitted from the district each year into this Institution. In all, 29 deaths belonging to our district occurred in the Workhouse during the past year. Many cases of both accident and disease are treated in hospitals in Liverpool, a certain number also in St. Helens, and a few cases of accident in Widnes.

We have in the district a well-conducted Isolation Hospital, known as the Whiston Sanatorium, for the treatment of infectious diseases. The Staff consists of a matron and four nurses. During the past year, 33 cases of scarlet fever and 30 cases of diphtheria have been removed into this hospital from our own district, and of these, two died, one from diphtheria, and one from scarlet fever and diphtheria combined. There have also been admitted 41 cases from other districts, including two cases of enteric fever, making a total number of patients admitted during the year of 104.

There is also accommodation in the district for the treatment of 20 cases of small pox.

A Sanatorium for the treatment of cases of tuberculosis, belonging to the St. Helens Corporation, is situated in our district, and a few of our cases have been admitted during the past year.

## WATER.

The Water Supply is from various sources, chiefly as follows: Bold, Cronton, Ditton, Hale, and parts of Halewood and Tarbock are supplied by Widnes Corporation mains, the water being obtained from deep wells in the red sandstone at Cronton and Netherley. It is excellent water. Portions of Eccleston, Halewood, Knowsley, Speke, Tarbock, and Whiston are supplied from Liverpool Corporation mains with excellent water. Whiston is chiefly supplied by a private company from a deep well in the red sandstone, within the township. Rainhill is also supplied from a deep sandstone well in the district. Both these waters are hard. St. Helens Corporation supply parts of Knowsley, Eccleston and Windle from various deep wells in the neighbourhood, all situated in red sandstone.

Other outlying parts of the district are supplied from wells, nearly all of which are surface wells and liable to contamination.

As a rule, the supply from the various mains is constant, but occasionally that in Whiston has been intermittent. In this township there is an alternative supply from the St. Helens mains.

Samples taken from the wells for chemical analysis during the year were condemned as being unfit for domestic use.

## RIVERS AND STREAMS.

The main stream running through the district is Ditton Brook, which, with its tributaries, runs through Knowsley, Whiston, Cronton, Tarbock, Halewood, and Ditton, its outlet being into the estuary of the River Mersey, between Ditton and Halebank. It is a tidal brook for about two miles. It is considerably polluted, but perhaps more so by neighbouring authorities than by our own townships. Near its mouth, in the tidal portion, three sewers discharge into it from the districts of Ditton and Halebank. Above the tidal length it has been considerably improved recently by being cleaned out and straightened.

Alder Brook, running from Knowsley into Boundary Brook, and thence into the River Alt, receives a portion of the sewage from Knowsley Village, and was formerly very offensive, but since being cleaned out it is in a very much better state.

The most offensive stream at present is the one running between Eccleston and Rainhill, and receiving the effluent from the Asylum Annexe, and some other property in Eccleston. This brook is now being thoroughly cleaned



and the effluent from the Asylum is to be connected with the main sewer for Eccleston and Whiston townships.

The brook running from Knowsley, through Eccleston and Windle, is practically free from pollution in our district.

A few smaller brooks, or rather ditches, chiefly in Cronton and Halewood, are considerably polluted with sewage.

### **DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.**

Ditton, Eccleston, Hale, Rainhill, Whiston, and portions of Bold, Halewood, Knowsley, and Windle are provided with sewers.

Those from Ditton, Hale, and Halewood discharge directly into the tidal parts of brooks running into the River Mersey.

Those from Eccleston, Whiston, and Rainhill discharge on to sewage farms for treatment by broad irrigation, the effluents discharging into brooks leading into the River Mersey.

The effluent from Rainhill Sewage Farm is generally satisfactory, but that from Eccleston and Whiston Sewage Farm, which is of more recent construction, is not as it should be. In my opinion, considerably more land is required for the efficient treatment of the amount of sewage to be dealt with, or the present works improved, as is contemplated by the Council.

The sewage from the Clock Face district of Bold is treated by filters with automatic sprinklers, and these are generally satisfactory.

Where sewers exist, the drains connected with them are provided with intercepting traps, air inlets, and ventilating shafts. In districts where there are no sewers, the drainage is mostly directed into brooks, but in a few instances small sedimentation tanks and filters are provided for the treatment of the sewage before it is allowed to enter any water course.

### **CLOSET ACCOMMODATION.**

Where no sewers exist, practically all closets are of the privy type, and there are a great many also in those townships which are provided with sewers. The total number of privies for the whole district is about 2,860. A few water closets are provided in the districts where no sewers exist; these then are provided with small septic tanks and filter beds, the effluents going into brooks. The total number of fresh water closets is 824. In the township of Whiston there are also 18 waste water closets. In this township chiefly, and also in a few other districts, there are a number of pail closets, the total amounting to 362.

Very few conversions have taken place since the beginning of the war. There were two privies converted into W.C.'s in 1919, but arrangements are being made for a large number of conversions to be made as soon as possible, chiefly in the townships of Bold, Ditton, and Halewood, where large numbers of privies exist.

### **SCAVENGING.**

In the townships of Eccleston, Rainhill, Whiston, and Windle, scavenging is done by contract, the contractor being assisted by the Sanitary Authority's own men in Rainhill and Whiston, the house refuse and contents of dry ashpits being used for the filling up of old pit holes, and the privy contents spread on the land and ploughed in.

In the rest of the districts, scavenging is done either by owners or occupiers. It is intended that in future the work shall be done by contract in Cronton, Ditton, Halewood, and the Clock Face portion of Bold.

In the more rural districts, such as Hale, Speke, Knowsley, and Tarbock, where each occupier has a garden, the contents of the privies are utilised in the gardens, or buried there by the tenants themselves.

In other districts, the contents are disposed of to farmers for use on the land. This is not a satisfactory method, as there is great difficulty in getting privies emptied regularly, and the farmers will only take the material when it suits their convenience, with the consequence that many privies become really unfit for use long before they are emptied, and it often happens also that they are not properly cleaned out when they are emptied. Again, many existing privies are of faulty construction, being too large, too deep, uncemented, or uncovered. When the contracts, and especially the conversions, above mentioned, are completed, a great sanitary improvement will have been accomplished.

No special arrangements are made for the cleansing of cesspools.

Within recent years, a few movable ashbins with covers have been substituted for fixed receptacles. Twelve have been provided by the Great Central Railway Company for their cottages in Halewood during the last year.

### **SANITARY INSPECTION OF DISTRICT.**

A whole-time Sanitary Inspector was appointed in June, 1919, the post having been held by the Surveyor, as a part-time office, for two and a half years after the death of the late Inspector. Towards the end of the year, an assistant Inspector was also appointed.

During the year, 227 notices were served for the abatement of nuisances. Of these, 212 were informal notices and 15 Statutory, and as a result, 193 nuisances were abated. No legal proceedings were taken by the Sanitary Inspector during the year.

#### **CLASSIFICATION OF NUISANCES ABATED.**

Defective and Choked Yard Drains ... ..	43
Dampness ... ..	34
Defective Floorings ... ..	27
Defective Window Frames and Windows ... ..	11
Defective Privies and Ashpits ... ..	20
Structural Defects (Yard Paving, etc) ... ..	27
Other Various Nuisances ... ..	31

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Total ... .. 193

#### **PREMISES AND OCCUPATIONS WHICH CAN BE CONTROLLED BY BYE-LAWS OR REGULATIONS.**

The only offensive trades in the district are those of manure manufacture. There are two of these works, both situated in Halebank, and both are satisfactory.

There are no common lodging-houses in the district. Recently, an application was made that a number of houses in course of construction might be made into a lodging-house for men employed at a colliery, but the application was refused as no plans of the necessary alterations were submitted.

A large number of houses are at present occupied by more than one family. In October last I estimated that there were 150 of these, but I have reason to believe that this was below the mark. The cause of this is the shortage of houses in the district, which is very acute, and applies to practically every township, the worst affected being Ditton, Halewood, Rainhill, and Whiston. The shortage of houses, with the resulting overcrowding, is also acting deleteriously by preventing young people from getting married, and is also a likely cause of immorality.

Besides the houses occupied by more than one family, there are a large number accommodating one or more lodgers, chiefly single men, or women, such as school teachers.

#### **SCHOOLS.**

There are 20 Public Elementary Schools in the district. All are supplied with water from mains, and their sanitary condition is generally satisfactory.



There are also 5 Private Schools, and as a rule, these also are satisfactory.

The Scholars in the public elementary schools are periodically inspected by a doctor and nurse, appointed by the County Council, and they report any cases of infectious diseases discovered and also exclude any children found to be suffering from skin diseases, etc. It is the practice, also, of most schoolmasters and mistresses to report to me any suspicious cases of infectious diseases which they may notice amongst the scholars; and the school attendance officers do likewise. I then examine these children, either in school, or more frequently, at their own homes, and take what steps I consider necessary. In any case, where it is reported that any considerable number of scholars are attacked by any infectious diseases, I visit the school and inspect the registers to enable me to decide what steps to take.

When excluding children from school for any infectious disease, I prefer, as a rule, to exclude contacts also. The Memo., re School Closure of 1909, suggests that contacts with cases of measles, who have previously suffered from the disease, should be allowed to attend school, but I do not agree with this suggestion, as it is quite possible to contract the disease more than once, and in recent epidemics, second and third attacks have been quite common. As this disease is very infectious for several days before the characteristic rash appears, I advise the exclusion of all contacts.

The only disease for which school closure has been adopted during 1919 was Influenza, during the severe epidemic at the beginning of the year. On February 17th, I advised the closing of Bold Heath School for a period of three weeks; and on February 20th, Hough Green C.E. School for four weeks, and on March 3rd, all schools in the district were closed until March 24th, by which time the epidemic had abated.

Previous to this epidemic, printed pamphlets had been circulated throughout the district, giving instructions as to the best means of preventing attack, and measures to be taken when attacked.

#### **MILK SUPPLY, &c.**

Milk is chiefly obtained from farmers in the district, but there are also a few purveyors of milk coming in from outside districts. The milk supply, as a rule, is adequate and is wholesome in character. The Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milk Shops Orders are carried out by the officials of the Authority. There are 181 cowkeepers on the register, and 50 inspections have been made during the year.



Reminders have been sent by post card to all cowkeepers, re cleansing and limewashing, which is required to be done at least twice in each year. A considerable improvement has taken place in the cleanliness of shippens, and in many instances now, fly papers are hung up, whereas formerly, in many cases, spiders' webs were left on the ceilings for the purpose of catching flies, which was a very dirty method, and the fly papers are more effective, and at the same time, much more cleanly, and it is to be hoped that their use will be further extended.

The examination of milk is done by officials of the County Council.

Under the Milk (Mothers and Children) Order of 1918, milk is supplied either free or at a reduced rate to expectant and nursing mothers, and to children, on application to the Local Authority, after enquiry by the Sanitary Inspector into individual circumstances.

#### **OTHER FOODS.**

Under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act, a piece of bacon exposed for sale was seized and condemned as unfit for human food, and the shopkeeper was prosecuted and fined £5 and costs, and the bacon ordered to be destroyed.

There are nine bakehouses and two slaughter-houses in the district, and their condition is generally satisfactory. I have frequently inspected meat just after slaughter, and in one case condemned a whole carcase, as the animal had been seriously affected with tuberculosis. No public abattoir has been provided, and I do not consider one necessary.

#### **INFECTIOUS DISEASES.**

The outstanding feature of the year was the very severe epidemic of Influenza, which occurred during the first quarter, and actually caused the death-rate to exceed the birth-rate for the first time on record. Forty-one deaths were directly attributed to this cause during the quarter, and 32 others from bronchitis and pneumonia, the majority of which were, in all probability, set up by influenza. The measures taken with regard to school closure, and the distribution of pamphlets have already been mentioned. The epidemic was most severe in the township of Bold, where it caused 19 deaths, and the only districts which escaped any mortality from this cause were the more particularly rural ones of Hale, Knowsley, Speke, and Tarbock.

There was an outbreak of Measles in the third quarter of the year, in the districts of Eccleston, Rainhill, and Whiston, but it was of a mild type, and no deaths were recorded from this disease.

Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria have been rather less prevalent than usual, 43, case of the former, and 38 of the latter being notified.

At the same time, I consider that we have more Diphtheria in the district than we should have, if the number of privy middens were reduced, as the effluxia from these places causes a relaxed condition of the throat, which is then more susceptible to the growth of the diphtheria bacillus.

A supply of diphtheria antitoxin is kept both at my house and at the Sanatorium, and any medical practitioner may obtain the same free on application. The majority of the cases are injected in the hospital, and 17 dozen phials, of 2,000 units each, have been used during the last year, a portion of which was for cases from outside districts.

A number of new diseases were made notifiable during the year. Of these, one case of Encephalitis Lethargica was notified, and a special report on the same sent to the Ministry of Health. Fifty-nine cases of Pneumonia, and 142 of Dysentery were also notified, but of these, 37 cases of Pneumonia, and all the Dysentery cases, except one, occurred amongst the inmates of Rainhill Asylum Annexe, the latter disease being one to which lunatics are especially liable.

Bacteriological aids to diagnosis may be made if sanctioned by the Medical Officer of Health, in which case the Local Authority pay for the examination, but we rarely have any applications. In the case of pulmonary tuberculosis, samples of sputum are taken by the County Council officials, and the result of the examination sent to the medical attendant. A considerable number of cases of Tuberculosis are not notified.

There have been no cases of Small Pox in the district for many years, and no vaccinations have been performed under the Small Pox Regulations of 1917.

There were five notifications of Ophthalmia Neonatorum during the year, only one of which was of a serious character. This was sent for treatment in St. Paul's Eye Institute in Liverpool, but the child died four days' after admission, from convulsions. Another case, which was not notified, also died in hospital, from Septic Meningitis.

Three cases of Puerperal Fever were notified, two of which proved fatal.

The total number of notifications received during the year was as follows:

Diphtheria and Membranous Croup ... ..	38
Erysipelas ... ..	7
Scarlet Fever ... ..	43
Puerperal Fever ... ..	3
Ophthalmia Neonatorum ... ..	5
Dysentery ... ..	142
Encephalitis Lethargica ... ..	1
Pneumonia ... ..	59
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ... ..	19
Other Cases of Tubercle ... ..	13
Measles and German Measles ... ..	74

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Total ... .. 404

## HOUSING.

The estimated number of houses in each of the twelve townships comprising the Whiston Rural District, at the end of 1919, is as follows:

Bold ... ..	345
Cronton ... ..	113
Ditton ... ..	615
Eccleston ... ..	431
Hale ... ..	106
Halewood ... ..	542
Knowsley ... ..	295
Rainhill ... ..	579
Speke ... ..	101
Tarbock ... ..	114
Whiston ... ..	823
Windle ... ..	200
Total ... ..	4264

Of this number I estimate that 3,200 are working class dwellings. During the year, 29 working class houses have been erected, all in Whiston, but a considerable development is about to take place in Eccleston, where Messrs. Pilkington Bros., of St. Helens, are going to build a large number of houses for their employees, and the first ten are in course of erection. In Whiston, also, the Hulton Colliery Co. are adding to the number of their houses already completed there.

I have already commented upon the population, and the shortage of houses. To meet the deficiency, the District Council have a scheme for the erection of a number of houses in each parish, and tenders have been obtained for their erection in two townships:

As previously stated, there is a good deal of overcrowding in the district. There are a number of houses having only one or two bedrooms, occupied by large families, one of the worst cases being a house with one living room below, and a single bedroom above, occupied by a man, wife, and seven children. A similar house adjoining is occupied by eight people.

I have been trying to get these people out for some months, but always get the same reply, that they cannot find another house.

There are, again, many instances of four-roomed houses, i.e., those with two living rooms and two bedrooms, where the front room downstairs has to be used as a sleeping room, and I have come across one or two cases where the same beds were occupied almost continuously.

Until more houses are available there is little prospect of overcoming this state of affairs.



A considerable number of houses are in an unfit state for human habitation, but I have not made any representations to the Council as no other dwellings are available.

In the Form of Survey of Housing Needs, prepared in October last, 10 areas, containing 56 houses, were placed in the first category, and 9 others, with 177 houses, in the second, as being unhealthy areas, which may have to be dealt with under the Housing Act of 1890. The chief defects in these areas are that they contain houses which are built back-to-back; are old and dilapidated; or generally insanitary.

In these cases, either closing or demolition orders are to be made when practicable.

### HOUSING INSPECTIONS, &c.

Total number of dwelling-houses inspected ... ..	129
Number specially inspected under Section 17 of the Act of 1909 ... ..	32
No. of dwelling-houses in respect of which complaints were made that they are unfit for human habitation:—	
(a) By householders ... ..	3
(b) By Parish Councils ... ..	0
Dwelling-houses considered unfit for human habitation, and representations to the Authority ... ..	0
[None presented, owing to shortage.]	
Closing Orders made ... ..	0
Dwelling-houses in which defects were remedied without making Closing Orders ... ..	13
Dwelling-houses put into a fit state after making Closing Orders ... ..	0
Dwelling-houses demolished ... ..	0
Orders for repairs issued (Housing Act, 1919) ... ..	65
Repairs by Local Authority ... ..	0
Dwelling-houses voluntarily closed on notice by owner that they could not be made fit without reconstruction ... ..	0
General character of defects found to exist: Dampness, defective ventilation, defective privies and ashpits, defective paving and drainage, overcrowding.	

THOMAS U. MERCER.

April, 1920.